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ABSTRACT

The major objective of this study is to produce specific policy recommendations aimed at improving the quality of the educational experience of visually handicapped students at Dawson College. The first section of the report focuses on Bill 9, "An Act to secure the handicapped in the exercise of their rights," in order to establish the nature of Dawson's legal commitment to the visually handicapped. Next, broad guidelines in keeping with the intention of the law are presented, including: (1) Dawson should accept all visually handicapped persons into its program when they meet entrance requirements; (2) Dawson should ensure that, once admitted, the student is not put at a disadvantage by his/her visual handicap vis-a-vis the successful completion of the courses in which the student is enrolled; (3) Dawson should take measures to facilitate the integration of visually handicapped students into the communal life of the college. The next section of the study outlines the problems and needs of visually handicapped students, many of which are common to all Colleges de Education General et Professional students. Finally, specific recommendations are proposed to tackle problems in the areas of the physical environment, academic problems in and outside of the classroom, student services, and extra-curricular activities. (AYC)

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A POLICY PERTAINING TO THE RECEPTION OF VISUALLY HANDICAPPED STUDENTS BY DAWSON COLLEGE

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July, 1979

JC 800 218

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INTRODUCTION

In this report, we address ourselves to the question: How can Dawson College more adequately respond to the needs of visually handicapped students? This paper presupposes that the college is prepared to meet the needs of the handicapped generally, and that the requirements of the visually handicapped are specific enough that they can be addressed independently but not in isolation of a general policy governing all handicapped students. Thus, the major objective of this study is to produce specific policy recommendations that are aimed at improving the quality of the educational experiences of visually handicapped students at Dawson.

With the above purpose in mind and in accordance with the belief that specific policy recommendations can only tackle the problem to which they are addressed if they are guided by a broader set of guidelines as well as by a reliable understanding of the concerned situation, the report is divided into four sections. First, we turn to Bill 9 "An Act to secure the handicapped in the exercise of their rights" (Assented to 23 June, 1978) to establish the nature of Dawson College's legal commitment to the visually handicapped. Second, broad guidelines which flow from the spirit of the above mentioned law are elaborated so as to provide a basis on which specific recommendations can be developed. Third, the problems and needs of the visually handicapped student are outlined in a systematic manner in order to facilitate the elaboration of recommendations. Fourth, specific solutions or recommendations are proposed to tackle these problems in a manner that is consistent with the guidelines developed in the second section of this report.

In relation to the delineation of the problems and needs of the concerned target group, the study makes use of three

principle sources of information: [1] a research project undertaken under the auspices of the Community Services Department (Continuing Education) of Dawson College entitled "A Needs Assessment of Sensory Deprived Students at the College Level in Quebec", A Symposioum which was organized in relation to the latter project to explore issues connected specifically to the needs of visually handicapped students at CEGEP and, finally, our experiences as visually handicapped students. It should also be added here that we both participated in the planning and realization of the above noted Symposium and this contributed to a broadening of our insights into this problem area.

We sincerely hope that this report has achieved the degree of specificity which was intended and will enable Dawson College to arrive at informed decisions regarding the implementation of measures that will improve the quality of the educational experiences of its visually handicapped students and of those it will be receiving in the future.

BILL 9

Even though the major objective of this report is to come up with specific recommendations related to the needs of visually handicapped students at Dawson, it is first imperative to abstract broad guidelines for action from Bill 9 which apply to handicapped persons in general. This will enable the task of proposing recommendations that are specific to the needs of the concerned student population to be oriented in accordance with basic principles.

> The main intent of this Bill is to ensure handicapped persons the full and equal recognition and exercise of

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[1] It should be noted that other sources of information were also consulted namely: M. Monnette-Champoux, "LES HANDICAPES AU CEGEP DE SAINTE-FOY: UNE PREMIERE ANALYSE", May 1978, Jean-Marie Morand, "RAPORT D'UNE ETUDE SUR LES MOYENS A PRENDRE POUR REPONDRE AUX BESOINS DES HANDICAPES DE LA VUE", College de Limoilou, April 1977, M. Beaudoin, An assessment of the needs of visually handicapped students at Rosemont CEGEP, as well as several other documents taken from the related file of Mr. William Young. (See the Bibliography).

> the rights and freedoms shared by all citizens. (Text of Bill 9, Explanation Notes, p. 2)
> This Bill provides various measures designed to ensure the educational, vocational and social integration of the handicapped person. (Ibid. p. 2)
> This Bill amends various existing laws, in particular, the Charter of human rights and freedoms, to provide that there is to be no discrimination against a person on the grounds that he is handicapped or uses any device as a palliative to his handicap. (Ibid. p. 3.)

From the above segments of the Bill, it is evident that educational institutions will play an important role in ensuring that handicapped persons are integrated into society. Section 94 of the Bill amends the Education Act in a manner that is congruent with the spirit of the law delineated above:

> The effect of the proposed amendment is to compel school boards to take the necessary steps to admit, to such classes as they may require, handicapped persons from 16 to 21 years of age who are in need of further general or vocational education and to facilitate their school, vocational and social integration. (Text of Bill 9, p. 32)

Even though there does not appear to be a particular section of the Act that is directly aimed at the CEGEP system or other institutions of higher learning, the intent of the Bill is clear. However, the purpose of the Bill is to establish in law the rights of handicapped persons and not to outline a blueprint of how this is to be achieved in all facets of everyday life. Nevertheless, we should expect some guidelines to emerge from the Department of Education vis-à-vis the integration of handicapped students in the province's CEGEPs as the research project named earlier (A Needs Assessment of Sensory Deprived Students at the College Level in Quebec) was commissioned by the Quebec government and will presumably serve as a basis for developing related policy. However, in view of the absence of such guidelines at this time, the following points seem to flow out of the basic spirit of Bill 9.

GUIDELINES

Bill 9 and the White Paper that preceded it are aimed at improving the situation faced by handicapped persons at

several levels (housing, transportation, education, work, leisure activities, access to public establishments, etc.). Above and beyond the adoption of this law and the implementation of its various policies, Dawson College must assume a responsibility towards the admission of visually handicapped students which goes beyond the act of opening the doors to the establishment. The college should ensure that the integration of visually handicapped persons to the overall functioning of Dawson should be undertaken under conditions where this group benefits from equal opportunity in the pursuit of their educational goals as well as in the area of participation in other campus activities.

1. Dawson College should accept all visually handicapped persons into its various programmes when they meet the specified entrance criteria.

This means that if a visually handicapped person has the required scholastic prerequisites, he/she should be admitted to any programme that student wishes to enter, whether it be a pre-university option or a career programme. According to the main thrust of Bill 9, refusal to admit a visually handicapped person (who has met the entrance requirements) to a given programme would amount to discrimination on the basis that a person has a handicap and would thus be in violation of this Act. However, this does not apply in the case where the programme to which the visually handicapped student seeks entrance prepares students to practice professions that are not legally open to visually handicapped persons (e.g., an ambulance driver programme). In such a case it would be the responsibility of the college to discourage the student from entering the programme, while paying special attention to make sure that the level of the person's sight does, in fact, disqualify that person from entering the field of study.

2. Once admitted, Dawson College should ensure that the visual handicap of the student does not put him/her at a disadvantage vis-à-vis the successful completion of the courses in which the student is enrolled.

It is the responsibility of the college to help the

visually handicapped student compensate for his/her handicap in the pursuit of the diploma or certificate being sought. According to the severity of the visual handicap, the extent and nature of this assistance will vary. This may include altering the physical environment or making certain material objects available to the student as well as ensuring that, in the sphere of student/teacher relations and relations with the other staff at the college, the interests of visually handicapped students are not compromised.

3. Dawson should also take measures so as to facilitate the integration of visually handicapped students into the communal life of the college.

The educational experience of a student at any given institution of higher learning is not restricted to the pedagogical arena. Therefore, if Dawson wishes to make the two or more years which a visually handicapped student will spend at the college a truly enriching experience, it should make sure that these students have occasion to participate in social events, student organizations and other extra-curricular activities.

Before we turn to a description of the problems faced by visually handicapped students at Dawson, we recommend that all the actions undertaken by the college to better receive these students be solutions to their demands. This will ensure that the college addresses itself to the needs of visually handicapped students and will minimize the risk of creating new problems and new needs. It is in accordance with this principle that the recommendations found later on in this report have been formulated.

PROBLEM AREAS

In reading through the following outline of the problems faced by visually handicapped students, two points should be taken into account. First, we wish to emphasize that there are various degrees of incapacity associated with visual handicaps. The handicap may range from total blindness to severe shortsightedness. In fact, the legal definition

of blindness (vision less than or equal to 20/200--Snellen Scale--in the most healthy eye after correction) includes a wide range of disabilities and this will affect the extent and nature of the problems faced by the visually handicapped student. Thus, the person whose visual handicap falls close to the limits of the legal definition of blindness may be almost totally independent as far as mobility is concerned (i.e., does not need a guide dog or a cane to get around) but may face most of the pedagogically related problems which are common to students with more severe visual handicaps. Another consideration is the type of visual impairment, which is also a major factor in the student's visual functioning. With some eye disorders vision may actually fluctuate and even stable visual conditions may be temporarily influenced by factors such as lighting, fatique, and emotions. Thus, in our discussion of the problems faced by the concerned student population, we do not specify which problem is likely to be associated with a given level of visual incapacity; rather we discuss the widest range of problems encountered by visually handicapped students as possible in an attempt to voice, as faithfully as possible, the concerns of all visually handicapped students. However, this point is very relevant to solutions to the needs of the concerned group. One solution to a visually handicapped student's needs may not necessarily be the solution to the related needs of another. We will return to this point during the course of our recommendations.

The second point relates to the question: Are the problems encountered by visually handicapped students unique to this group? In this respect, the Symposium, described earlier, was very helpful in shedding light on the subject. By first looking into the problems of sighted students and then exploring the problems and needs of visually handicapped students through the perspectives of visually handicapped students and those who presently attend CEGEP, teachers, other college staff, administrators and finally government, we came to the realization that, in many cases, the problems

faced by the concerned group are amplifications of dilemmas encountered by all CEGEP students. The following is a list of some of the problems which emerged in relation to students in general:

--Unawareness of the services available to students at college.
--Confusion at pre-registration or registration arising out of a lack of prior knowledge concerning available courses and registration procedures.
--Difficulty in contacting teachers for purposes of consultation.
--Books are not always available at the bookstore at the beginning of the semester.
--Disorientation, both in terms of the physical layout and with respect to the social life of the college, during the first days at school.
--Lack of guidance concerning educational and career planning.

In reading through the remainder of this report, we urge you to keep some of these problems in mind with the aim of noting to what extent these and other problems which confront sighted students at Dawson are amplified for the visually handicapped. This observation also has implications for the recommendations to be formulated in the next section. In some instances, the policy recommendations appear to call for changes that will affect the entire student population. This is in fact the objective of some of the solutions proposed. Would it not be a noteworthy achievement if, by implementing certain policies designed to help the visually handicapped, some of the problems faced by the general student population of Dawson College were also alleviated?

I. THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

A) Mobility and Familiarization with the Physical Environment

Familiarization with the physical layout of the campus (classrooms, library, cafeteria, washrooms, elevators, etc.) often presents problems--particularly at a multi-campus institution such as Dawson. However, these problems are usually of a temporary nature and the visually handicapped student becomes used to the environment and can "get around" like most other students. The visually handicapped person faces

mobility problem in all other facets of his/her everyday life and it is not surprising to find out that the survey undertaken by the previously noted "A Needs Assessment of Sensory Deprived Students at the College Level in Quebec" research project and the Symposium revealed that most visually handicapped students did not see mobility as a major concern.[2] However, this does not mean that there are no problems related to mobility and the recommendations put forward later on would, if implemented, help the student to overcome mobility problems and speed up the process of familiarization with the physical layout.

B) Lack of Special Equipment

Certainly one of the most urgent needs of visually handicapped students is special visual aids and writing devices which help the student compensate for the handicap. Dawson College does not have any such equipment at this time and, in this respect, the college has much catching up to do if it is to equal the positive impact of the programmes implemented in some other Canadian institutions of higher learning to help the concerned student population. (For more information on this subject see "A SURVEY OF FACILITIES FOR PHYSICALLY AND VISUALLY HANDICAPPED AND DEAF STUDENTS AT CANADIAN UNIVERSITIES", Anne E. MacDonald, Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, Ottawa, June 1978). The findings of the previously mentioned survey show that, of a list of 14 items which could be improved or implemented to better serve the needs of the visually handicapped, the Anglophone visually handicapped respondents presently attending CEGEP ranked electronic and mechanical aids as the most

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[2] This is apparent if we look at the responses of the visually handicapped to question 4 of the survey (see Appendix A and B) undertakkn as part of "A Needs Assessment of Sensory Deprived Students at the College Level in Quebec." For both visually handicapped students who have completed CEGEP and who are presently attending CEGEP (Francophone and Anglophone), problems related to the physical layout were ranked the least important among the four potential problem areas listed.

important area to concentrate on. The visually handicapped Francophone students presently attending CEGEP also attached much importance to this area, ranking it as the third most important item on the list, and the Anglophone respondents who had completed their CEGEP education likewise attached much importance to visual aids and other mechanical and electronic devices, ranking them fourth as a priority. Without the availability of these devices (closed-circuit television viewing system, optacon, braillewriter, etc.), the visually handicapped student does not profit from the time spent at school outside of the hours devoted to courses. It is often very hard if not impossible to schedule one's courses so that a student does not have to spend much time at the college in between classes. Unless the student has the necessary equipment available for use during this time, he/she will not be able to spend the time constructively (doing school-related work) and will thus be at a disadvantage vis-à-vis the successful completion of his/her academic pursuits, if compared to the sighted students. The availability of such devices would also help the concerned students to better use the facilities of the library at school instead of having to bring back home all the books and other materials to read them or to have them read or taped.

However, the need for special equipment should not be seen as being limited only to visual aids and writing equipment. For instance in a mathematics course the visually handicapped student may require a talking calculator so that he/she may benefit from equal opportunity in the pursuit of knowledge. This need for special equipment (other than visual aids and writing tools) would seem to be more applicable in the case of some three year technology programmes and some natural science programmes (especially in labs). In such cases, the lack of suitable equipment may prevent a visually handicapped student from entering the programme. An example of this would be in the area of data processing and computer science, where a blind student could not even think of enter-

ing the programme if a computer terminal or a key punch machine did not have braille read-outs. Many machines which have been converted for use by blind people are available and, with the level of technology which exists today, adapting machinery to suit the needs of visually handicapped students is a realistic objective.

II. ACADEMIC PROBLEMS

At this point let us now turn to a consideration of the specific academic problems faced by visually handicapped students, their teachers, and other college personnel.

A. The Academic Problems of the Visually Handicapped Student

1. Access to Academic Information

The problem of obtaining academic information, as we learned from the Symposium, often presents problems for sighted students, because of the massive quantity of academic information that is available to students in the college. Therefore, it is not surprising to find out that visually handicapped students encounter serious problems in this area. For example, some students felt that there was need for academic orientation in which such matters as the registration process, course content, and specific programme requirements for graduation would be explained in detail.

2. Academic Problems in the Classroom

2.1. Printed materials in the classroom. The need to work with printed materials in the classroom has been identified by the visually handicapped students in all our sources of data as one of their major concerns. More specifically, this problem of working with printed materials in the classroom is encountered in two ways: (1) taking chalkboard notes; and (2) reading reproduced materials, tests, and textbooks.

In courses where a great deal of use is made of chalkboard notes, the visually handicapped student often has to make arrangements to get the notes. Some students make arrangements to have a student in the class make carbon copies of his/her notes and lend them; students borrow the

teacher's copy of the notes being put on the board or the book from which the teacher has taken the notes; and some students make arrangements to have the teacher say the notes aloud as they are being written on the board, enabling the visually handicapped student to take them down as dictation.

Many visually handicapped students encounter problems working with reproduced materials, tests, and textbooks. For visually handicapped students the problem is one of getting copies of reproduced materials in order that they might be adapted as far ahead of time as possible--that is, to be enlarged, darkened, transcribed into braille, or put onto tape.

2.2. The problem of participating in classroom discussions and demonstrations. Many visually handicapped students find it difficult to fully participate in all classroom activities, particularly class discussions and demonstrations. During the course of class discussions, for example, a visually handicapped student may not notice a facial expression, suggesting that he/she respond to a point or question. In this case, verbal cues are obviously necessary in order to involve the student.

When classroom demonstrations are being conducted, many visually handicapped students will not be able to gain very much information unless they can stand next to or to the side of the demonstration, or they are given an opportunity to handle the materials before or after the demonstration.

2.3. The problem of writing exams and completing assignments: the evaluation process. An examination of the data, obtained from the various sources described earlier in this report, suggests that visually handicapped students are very concerned about their right to be evaluated in a manner which would take their visual handicap into account. This concern over evaluation raises two questions for Dawson: Should evaluation tools, such as multiple choice exams, essay-type exams, take-home exams, and so on, be used in order to evaluate visually handicapped students? Do evaluation techniques change according to the subject matter?

Furthermore, when considering this matter of the evaluation of exams and assignments, Dawson must examine the question of time limitations. In the case of an in-class exam, for example, in order to take into account the visual handicap of a particular student--perhaps he/she has a slower reading and writing speed--so as to provide a fair evaluation, does Dawson want to modify or eliminate altogether time limitations. Similarly, when it comes to completing long term projects, Dawson must decide whether or not to set time limitations for the completion of the work.

3. Remedial Academic Assistance

Many visually handicapped students feel that there is need for some remedial academic assistance, particularly in the areas of study skills, writing, and individual tutoring--for example, in mathematics. They regard such assistance as vital in order to assure that they will have the opportunity to reach their full academic potential.

4. The Problem of Library Research

For sighted students library research does not pose too many problems. The card catalog and the stacks are readily accessible to them; however, for visually handicapped students, the situation is quite different. Visually handicapped students have to rely on volunteers to assist them with their research. Then, once the research in the library is completed, the student must again seek the aid of volunteers in order to have the materials put onto tape, transcribed into braille, or otherwise adapted for his/her use. It should be noted that this is why so many visually handicapped students make an effort to contact their teachers, the library, and the bookstores; the knowledge of what is required and available well in advance of the beginning of the class gives them the opportunity to receive their materials on time.

Visually handicapped students have also indicated that they experience difficulties gaining access to textbooks and other materials on library reserve where these materials may

be borrowed on restricted loan periods. Again, the problem is one of getting the materials for a long enough period to have them adapted for the student.

B. The Perspective of the Faculty and Other College Personnel

During the Symposium it became clear to us that many teachers and other college personnel were not fully aware of the problems faced by the visually handicapped. The Symposium went some distance in making the needs of this segment of the student population better understood; however, the job has just started. Indeed, it should be pointed out that if more and more visually handicapped students decide to attend Dawson College (as a result of a commitment to a policy pertaining to the reception of visually handicapped students at Dawson), many faculty and other college staff, such as those in Academic Advising, will be working with visually handicapped persons for the first time. Later in this report we will make a number of recommendations designed to deal with the problem of making the Dawson faculty and other personnel more aware of the needs of this segment of the student population.

III. STUDENT SERVICES AND THE VISUALLY HANDICAPPED

During the Symposium we learned that students, both sighted and visually handicapped, often delay seeking assistance or information until their problems or concerns become overwhelming or very complex and apparently unmanageable. It was suggested that students could identify themselves to Student Services personnel in the appropriate department as soon as possible; in that way their problems could be dealt with before they get too far out of hand. It was suggested that the visually handicapped students contact Student Services soon after being accepted by the college, thus enabling the appropriate department within Student Services to provide the necessary assistance.

Rozanne Millen, Dawson Student Services, put the matter rather nicely when she said:

> The student needs to begin accepting responsibility for his or her own decisions and actions. One way that

> students--and especially handicapped students--can get the most out of their college experience is to explain their particular needs as clearly and explicitly as possible. "We are not magicians, miracle workers or mind readers"....
>
> While at college a person can expect to grow and develop in many areas of life--personal, academic, social and vocational. The primary goal of the various departments of Student Services, and in particular the Counseling Service, is to facilitate this learning process for the student. (See Appendix D).

Students, both sighted and visually handicapped, if they so desire, can take advantage of personal, group, educational, and vocational counseling services, as well as regular programs and workshops.

It is important to note that in addition to providing academic, personal and vocational counselling, Student Services can assist visually handicapped students in two other areas. First, (we know from past experience with Dawson Student Services), Student Services can contact appropriate faculty and staff in order to assist the student to make better use of his/her study time. Secondly, Student Services may be able to arrange to find volunteers who assist students by reading on tape, helping with research in the library, and so on. Indeed, it seems reasonable to suggest that if more and more visually handicapped students decide to attend Dawson College in the next few years, Student Services will find its personnel having to deal with a student population encountering problems with everyday academic activities, such as those described above.

IV. EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

A. Access to Information

Perhaps one of the most important areas to tackle, if we wish to take steps to facilitate the integration of the visually handicapped student into the communal life of the college, concerns the manner in which information related to various activities occuring at the college is defused. How can one participate in extra-curricular activities if one is not aware of what is going on? According to the sever-

ity of the visual handicap, the student may not be able to gain access to information through conventional media (posters, newspapers, flyers, etc.) If visual aids are made available, this will alleviate the problem to a considerable extent (the student will be able to read a flyer or newspaper the same day it comes out) but will not solve it to a satisfactory degree. Access to information was named most often by Anglophone visually handicapped students presently attending CEGEP as the need which was receiving the least amount of attention by the various CEGEPs in the province. (question 6 of the "Needs Assessment..." survey of the visually handicapped students).

B. Participation in Extra-Curricular Activities

It does not necessarily follow that, if a visually handicapped student is aware of the extra-curricular activities which take place at Dawson and wishes to participate in some of these, the student will be able to take a meaningful part in these activities. There may be as many obstacles to overcome in this sphere as there are with respect to the academic pursuits of the student. The problems faced by visually handicapped students may in fact be similar and may range anywhere from a lack of special equipment to poor communication between the student and the organizers of the activity and/or other participants, that is, problems in the sphere of human relations. Activities to which the concerned group may seek entrance are probably quite similar to those sought by the general student population and may include such areas as student government, organized sports, or fitness classes, the CEGEP newspaper and radio stations, other student clubs or organizations, and so on. If we wish to adhere to the principles which flow out of Bill 9, we must ensure that the visual handicap of the student does not become grounds for denial for admission to extra-curricular activities, just as we should ensure that it does not deny entry to an academic course or programme for which the student is qualified. Furthermore, just as in the academic sphere, we should help the student

compensate for the handicap in his/her participation in the activity. The concern for equal opportunity with respect to participation in the non-academic life of the college was not only voiced at the Symposium which was held to look into the needs of the visually handicapped student at CEGEP, but it was also reflected in the findings of the "Needs Assessment..." survey. Even though the two academically related areas "inside the class" and "outside the classroom" were ranked as the two most important spheres for concern for both visually handicapped students presently attending CEGEP and those who have completed this phase of their education (see question 4 Appendices A and B), the fact that the sphere of Student Services and Extra-Curricular activities was ranked third, ahead of problems related to the physical layout, reflects the strong concern these students have with respect to their integration into the communcal life at CEGEP.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To briefly outline the main thrust of this section of the report, we do not recommend any large capital expenditures aimed at altering the existing physical layouts at the various campuses of Dawson College. The rationale for this was brought up in the discussion of problems related to mobility and familiarization with the environment and pertains mainly to the fact that visually handicapped students did not consider this area as a priority which was specific to educational establishments. However, we do suggest some changes that should be carried out in view of any new construction or building modifications to be undertaken in the future. The only sizable and immediate monetary dispursements which we advocate pertain to the acquisition of special equipment (reading and writing aids mainly) which will help visually handicapped students compensate for their handicap in the pursuit of their academic objectives.

The majority of the proposed solutions to the needs and problems of the concerned group are related to the sphere of human relations (student/teacher relations, student/other

staff relations, teacher/administration relations, etc.). In one case, we recommend that an additional staff member be hired or, at least, that someone now working in the Student Services department be officially given the responsibility of assisting the visually handicapped at Dawson. Thus, for the most part, our recommendations call for the reorganization of already existing human resources and the implementation of policies which would require relatively small capital expenditures in view of the enormous benefits they would bring to the group in question.

I. THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT: SOME RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Re: Mobility and Familiarization with the Physical Layout.

1. If Dawson College was to undertake the construction of new buildings or alter existing facilities, the following architectural guidelines should be followed:

--Place all classroom identification numbers at eye level near the door frame in large indented characters.

--Self-operating elevators should have large number indicators and braille labels on the controls.

--Staircases should have hand-ramps on both sides.

NOTE: Other guidelines to follow in planning construction or in altering buildings are surely available from architectural colleges or from the various associations which cater to the visually handicapped.

2. Upon his/her arrival at Dawson, the visually handicapped student should be given an orientation tour of the facilities in which he/she will have to function. This should include the location of the classrooms to be frequented during the first semester, the various Student Services offices--Guidance, Manpower, Registrar, etc.--the cafeteria, washrooms, the library and other places which are likely to be frequented by the student. Also, prior to the beginning of each subsequent semester, the student should be shown the location of the courses he/she will be attending.

B. Re: The Lack of Special Equipment

1. Dawson College should purchase or obtain through any

other means (through the Ministry of Education and/or the Ministry of Social Affairs) the necessary reading and writing aids to assist visually handicapped students. This should include a closed-circuit television read/write viewing system, (with, if possible, the attachment for simultaneous reading and typing), a braillewriter and an optacon reading system for the blind. In view of the wide range of possible visual handicaps discussed earlier, we believe that the above equipment should be acquired without exception. For example, a totally blind student will not be able to benefit from the use of a closed-circuit television system while a partially sighted student may make a more efficient use of such a system and benefit much less from the use of an optacon system. In view of the multi-campus set-up at Dawson, a crucial question is: Where should such equipment be placed so that it will best serve the concerned student population? The answer will depend on the extent to which the concerned group is concentrated on any one campus and if there is any correlation between this concentration and the level of the visual handicap. For example, if, after an investigation of the breakdown by campus and by degree of handicap of the visually handicapped student population, the findings showed that the concerned students tended to be concentrated on two campuses and that one of these campuses had a higher concentration of partially sighted students and, the other, a higher concentration of totally blind students, it would be logical to recommend that the closed-circuit television system be placed on the campus with the higher concentration of partially sighted students and that the optacon system be put on the campus with the higher concentration of totally blind students. In addition to the above consideration, it would be appropriate to place this equipment in a library (or in libraries) in special rooms to house these machines to provide the visually handicapped student with a quiet place to study and to make the library more accessible.

2. When a piece of equipment other than that described

above is absolutely necessary if a visually handicapped student wishes to undertake a particular course or programme, Dawson should acquire the equipment in question if it is available.

This recommendation is also in keeping with the broad guidelines outlined earlier in that if we are to ensure that visually handicapped persons have equal opportunity vis-à-vis education, we should help them compensate for their handicap by providing special equipment. It simply extends the sphere of the college's responsibility beyond the act of supplying reading and writing devices to include all other equipment to be used in the pursuit of academic objectives (e.g., computer terminals, data processing machines, etc.).

II. ACADEMIC PROBLEMS

A. The Academic Problems of the Visually Handicapped Student: Some Recommendations

Prior to making our specific recommendations designed to deal with the various academic problems of the visually handicapped student, we feel that some space should be devoted to a discussion of Dawson's new Mentor System. We feel that the Mentor System would be of particular benefit to visually handicapped students in the following ways: it would serve as yet another source of information and academic assistance for the student; it would serve as a complement to the liaison function carried out at present by Student Services personnel; and, it would assure a reasonably smooth transition from high school to CEGEP. It is our hope that the college's new Mentor System will receive the full support of both the faculty and student population. If the Mentor System proves to be successful, every effort should be made to involve the visually handicapped students at Dawson in the Programme.

1. Re: Access to Academic Information

1. In order that visually handicapped students can gain access to the necessary academic information, we recommend that they be strongly encouraged to contact both the Regist-

rar's Office which offers a comprehensive academic advising service, as well as Dawson Student Services. The Registrar's Office and Student Services, in co-operation with the various academic departments at the college, should all assist in the orientation of visually handicapped students. By employing this cooperative approach, we believe that potential problems faced by the visually handicapped student can be adequately considered and solutions arrived at before the student begins his/her course of studies.

2. Re: Academic Problems in the Classroom

2.1. Re: Printed Materials in the Classroom

1. In order that the required printed materials might be adapted as far ahead of time as possible, we recommend that Dawson consider the possibility of pre-registration for visually handicapped students. In that way, if a department knew that it was going to have a visually handicapped student in its programme, it might be able to give titles and other relevant course information out prior to the beginning of class.

2. We recommend that the various academic departments investigate the feasibility of a standard bibliography for each course in its sector. These bibliographies could be made available several weeks or months prior to the beginning of the semester.

3. In order to assist the visually handicapped student in the preparation of his/her materials, particularly the reading of printed materials onto tape, we recommend that Student Services assume responsibility for finding volunteers among the Dawson College student body and staff. In addition, we further recommend that Student Services establish a liaison between the College and the various agencies for the blind, such as the Montreal Association for the Blind, the Canadian National Institute for the Blind, Institut Nazareth et Louis-Braille, and Magnetotheque Generale pour les Aveugles due Quebec, in order that printed materials might be transcribed into braille and/or put onto tape.

2.2. Re: The Problem of Participating in Classroom Discussions and Demonstrations

1. In order to assure the visually handicapped student reaches his/her full academic potential, we recommend that arrangements be made between Dawson College and the various agencies for the blind, in particular the Montreal Association for the Blind, and Institut Nazareth et Louis-Braille, so that the faculty and visually handicapped students will receive the supportive services of a special teacher of the visually handicapped. Such a liaison will give both students and faculty a chance to discuss classroom situations with this consultant. It should be noted that this special teacher is called an itinerant teacher. The itinerant teacher travels to the various educational institutions in the community and is available on a scheduled basis. This teacher is available for consultation, and the provision of materials especially adapted for the visually handicapped.

2.3. Re: Writing Exams and Completing Assignments

1. We recommend that Dawson College should affirm the right of the visually handicapped student to be evaluated in a manner which takes his/her visual handicap into account. Furthermore, we recommend that if this requires the instructor to use a different evaluation tool than is normally used then the instructor, the student, and the department involved should come to an agreement concerning the nature of the evaluation process.

2. On the question of whether or not time limitations should be eliminated for visually handicapped students, we recommend that Dawson College be prepared to modify or eliminate altogether time limitations, in order to take into account the individual situation of the visually handicapped student. Again, we suggest that the visually handicapped student and the faculty in the various academic departments should come to a satisfactory arrangement on this matter. For departments wishing to modify time limitations to complete exams and assignments, we point out that allowing time and a half is usually considered acceptable.

3. Remedial Academic Assistance: Some Recommendations

1. We recommend that the Dawson College Learning Centre be prepared to offer all its existing programmes to the visually handicapped. The Learning Centre should have at its disposal the supportive services of the itinerant teacher. The itinerant teacher would be able to provide specialized instruction and limited individualized tutoring.

4. Library Research: Some Recommendations

1. We recommend that the staff in the various campus libraries be prepared to assist visually handicapped students locate their desired books and other materials; that there be an extended loan period; that there be a revision in the Library Reserve Policy in order to take the special needs of the visually handicapped into account; and, that a working area should be set up in every library in order that students might be able to make maximum use of their time in the library.

2. We recommend that Dawson Student Services should assist both the visually handicapped students and the library staff by finding volunteers who can help in the library with research and the reading of the materials.

B. Academic Problems from the Perspective of Faculty and Other College Personnel: Some Recommendations

1. Re: The Problem of Awareness and Adequate Training

1. In order to increase the awareness of the faculty and staff of Dawson concerning the needs of the visually handicapped, we recommend that the Faculty Development and Resource Centre assume a vital and important role here. More specifically, it can carry out this function in two ways. First, the Centre could add books, pamphlets, and other materials pertaining to the education of the visually handicapped to its already established collection of books, journals, and numerous files on various aspects of education. (see Appendix E for a suggested list of books). The Centre could also set up seminars and workshops on various subjects dealing with the education of the visually handicapped at Dawson. Since each campus has a Faculty Development Committee and a Co-ord-

inator to organize seminars and activities relevant to the faculty on that particular campus, it seems reasonable to recommend that this committee be encouraged to set up seminars and workshops on the education of the visually handicapped.

III. STUDENT SERVICES AND THE VISUALLY HANDICAPPED: SOME RECOMMENDATIONS

1. We recommend that, in addition to its regular programmes, Dawson Student Services be prepared to assist the visually handicapped student in three areas: (1) it should act as a liaison between students, faculty and other staff in order to assure that the students have the opportunity to reach their full academic potential; (2) Student Services should arrange for volunteers who would assist students in various ways; and (3) Student Services should act as a liaison for students with the numerous agencies for the blind in the Greater Montreal Area.

2. Once Dawson has established a policy pertaining to the reception of the visually handicapped, it must go out into the community and inform the visually handicapped population of its commitment to meeting their particular educational needs. We feel that Dawson Student Services has a key role to play in this information programme. It will be important for the Student Services personnel to establish and maintain contact with high school guidance counsellors in an effort to reach visually handicapped high school students who are considering the possibility of further education at the CEGEP level. Thus, it is important for Dawson to develop a recruitment plan that will appeal to the visually handicapped student population the college wishes to serve.

IV. EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES: SOME RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Re: Access to Information

1. Flyers and posters distributed by the various departments of the college should (as much as possible) state their messages in large characters.

2. If it is not already the case, there should be an effort made to have as many messages and announcements aired on the

college's radio system at regular times each day. These announcements should include not only information related to academic activities (such as class cancellations and guest lecturers) but also extra-curricular activities. Special care should be taken to inform visually handicapped students of the schedule of these radio announcements and of any subsequent changes to that schedule.

B. Re: Participation in Extra-Curricular Activities

1. Visually handicapped students should be encouraged to participate in extra-curricular activities by their Mentors and by all other staff at Dawson.

2. All visually handicapped students wishing to participate in extra-curricular activities should be admitted to these activities. There should be a serious effort made to ensure that the student in question is not denied entry to a given activity for any other reason than the danger participation would present to that student and/or to other persons involved in the activity.

3. Dawson College should help the student compensate for the visual handicap in the pursuit of the activity.

In order to avoid repetition, we simply wish to add here that if the college wishes to ensure that visually handicapped students have equal opportunity in both the sphere of academic endeavors and in the area of extra-curricular activities, it should apply the recommendations which are specific to the former area when similar kinds of problems arise in the realm of extra-curricular activities.

APPENDIXES WERE DELETED DUE TO IRREPRODUCIBILITY

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